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Message Text

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R 310813Z JAN 77
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
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INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 HONG KONG 01243

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR CH UR
SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR PRC/USSR RAPPROCHEMENT

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. DESPITE CURRENT INDICATIONS THAT NEITHER THE PRC NOR THE USSR SERIOUSLY INTENDS TO TRY TO BRING ABOUT ANY SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN THEIR EXTERNAL RELATIONS, CONCERN PERSISTS THAT THIS SITUATION CULD CHANGE. THE PRESUMED CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. OF ANY TREND TOWARD IMPROVED USSR/PRC RELATIONS ARE SEVERE ENOUGH TO MERIT LOOKING AT WHAT THE CHINESE MIGHT BE WILLING AND ABLE TO DO IF THEY MADE A DECISION TO TRY TO SEEK BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, WHAT THEY WOULD EXPECT FROM THE SOVIET UNION IN RETURN AND HOW OUR INTERESTS WOULD BE AFFECTED. OUR OVERALL CONCLUSION IS THAT IT WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY FOR US TO PAY A HIGH PRICE TO THE PRC ON ANY BILATERAL ISSUE SOLELY BECAUSE OF FEAR THAT FAILURE TO DO SO MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO A SINO-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT. THIS MESSAGE
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SHOULD BE READ AS A COMPANION PIECE TO EMBASSY MOSCOW'S EXCELLENT 17617 (1976) ON THE SAME GENERAL SUBJECT.

OUR ANALYSIS WILL COVER THOSE AREAS WHERE IT SEEMS POSSIBLE SOME DEGREE OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS COULD BE ACHIEVED, NAMELY A GENUINE BORDER SETTLEMENT LEADING TO MUTUAL REDUCTION OF FORCES FACING EACH OTHER ALONG THE

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LONG BORDER, A MODUS VIVENDI IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, LESS CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS IN THE U.N. AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND A CEASEFIRE IN IDEOLOGY.
END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

THE BORDER

1. THE BORDER DISPUTE IS MORE A SYMPTOM THAN A CAUSE OF THE SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT. A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE LONG AND DESULTORY NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS ISSUE, OR EVEN A TONING DOWN OF THE PRC'S PROPAGANDA TREATMENT OF IT, WOULD PROBABLY BE THE FIRST CLEAR SIGN OF A CHINESE INTEREST IN A CHANGE OR AT LEAST THE APPEARANCE OF CHANGE IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

2. WHATEVER THE PRC'S MOTIVE, WHETHER TO BEGIN A SERIOUS EFFORT TO REDUCE THE SOVIET THREAT OR TO GAIN LEVERATE WITH THE NEW UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION BY EXPLOITING U.S., JAPANESE AND EUROPEAN FEARS OF A PRC/USSR RAPPROCHEMENT, THE PROGRESS THE PRC COULD HOPE TO MAKE IN THE ACTUAL SUBSTANCE OF THE BORDER NEGOTIATIONS APPEARS LIMITED. THE TWO SIDES MIGHT BE ABLE TO REMOVE SOME FLASH POINTS AND THEREBY REDUCE SOMEWHAT THE LEVEL OF TENSION, BUT THE EXPERIENCE OF CENTURIES SUGGESTS IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THIS BORDER COULD EVER BECOME GENUINELY UNDISPUTED AND THAT THE TWO PARTIES COULD DEVELOP SUFFICIENT TRUST TO BE AT EASE WITH IT.

3. EMBASSY MOSCOW POINTS OUT THAT SOVIET INTENTIONS ON COMING TO AN AGREEMENT AT ALL CAN BE ASSESSED BY ITS BEHAVIOR
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ON TROOP WITHDRAWALS. THE PRC SHARES THIS VIEW AND LOOKS WITH GREAT SUSPICION ON THE USSR'S UNWILLINGNESS THUS FAR TO CONSIDER ANY REDUCTION IN FORCES ALONG THE BORDERS. PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT HAVE MUCH LEEWAY IN ANY CASE. MANY OF ITS FORCES IN THE FAR EAST HAVE A U.S/JAPAN ROLE AND MOST ARE DEPLOYED FORWARD IN FIXED INSTALLATIONS WHICH WOULD BE EXPENSIVE TO RECONSTRUCT ELSEWHERE. IN THE NORTHEAST, THEY WOULD FIND PARTICULARLY IN HOSPITABLE AREAS TO WITHDRAW TO. IN THE CASE OF CHINA, WHOSE FORCES ARE DEPLOYED IN DEPTH ALONG THE ENTIRE, RELATIVELY UNPOPULATED BORDER, TIS MANEUVERABILITY IN REDUCING FORCE LEVELS BY DRAWING BACK TO CROWDED INTERIOR CHINA IS EVEN MORE LIMITED. MOREOVER, THE PC FEELS THAT IT IS THE THREATENED PARTY.

4. WHAT WE ARE SAYING IS THAT ALTHOUGH A BORDER SETTLEMENT COULD CONCEIVABLY BE ACHIEVED IT THE CHINESE MADE A POLICY DECISION TO DO SO AND WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE WORLD AT LARGE AS A DRAMATIC BREATHRGOUGH, IN REALITY IT WOULD NOT

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SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE STRATEGIC LINE-UP ALONG THE BORDER
OR THE BASIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

GLOBAL ISSUES

5. FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN PRC/USSR RELATIONS TO IMPACT
ADVERSELY ON U.S. INTERESTS, THE RAPPROCHEMENT WOULD HAVE TO
EXTEND BEYOND THE BORDER ISSUE. THE PROBLEM FOR CHINA, HOW-
EVER, IS THAT ITS ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE OR CREATE THE IMPRES-
SION OF IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET
UNION WILL INEVITABLY INVOLVE ACTIONS WHICH RUN COUNTER TO
CHINA'S GLOBAL INTERESTS.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 HONG KONG 1243

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

THIRD WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

6. PRESUMABLY, SHOULD PEKING WISH TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF
AN IMPROVEMENT IN SINO/SOVIET RELATIONS, IT WOULD REDUCE THE
STERILE ANTI-SOVIET RHETORIC THAT NOW CHARACTERIZES CHINESE
STATEMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. THIS COULD ACTUALLY
INCREASE CHINA'S INFLUENCE IN THESE ORGANIZATIONS SINCE HER
PRACTICE OF REDUCING NEARLY EVERY ISSUE TO AN ATTACK ON THE
USSR HAS PROVED INCREASINGLY UNPRODUCTIVE AND HAS MET WITH

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GROWING RESENTMENT IN THE U.N. AND OTHER BODIES. HOWEVER, COLLABORATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS A DIFFERENT MATTER. THERE IS AMPLE DOCUMENTATION OF CHINA'S CONCERN REGARDING THE SOVIET UNION'S EXPANSIONIST DESIGNS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, INDIAN OCEAN AND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THESE ARE AREAS WHERE THE PRC IS UNABLE TO PROJECT ANY INFLUENTIAL PHYSICAL PRESENCE AND THUS IS FORCED TO COMPETE IN THE DIPLOMATIC AND PROPAGANDA ARENAS. PEKING WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY FEEL THAT ANY APPEARANCE OF
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SUBSTANTIVE COOPERATION WITH MOSCOW WOULD UNDERMINE THIRD WORLD RESISTANCE TO SUCH SOVIET INITIATIVES AS THE ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY PLAN WITHOUT OFFERING OFFSETTING BENEFITS TO THEMSELVES.

INDOCHINA

7. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD BE ENHANCED IT THE SOVIET UNION AND THE CHINESE COULD MAKE IT APPEAR THAT A MODUS VIVENDI WERE OPERATING IN INDOCHINA. CERTAIN CHANGES IN THE SITUATION IN THE AREA COULD DEVELOP FROM THIS.

8. THE CESSATION OF OPEN RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR COMMUNIST POWERS COULD DEPRIVE THE VIETNAMESE AND THEIR LAO SATELLITE OF THEIR MAJOR LEVERAGE FOR EXTRACTING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND MORE THAN LIKELY RESULT IN A REDUCED SOVIET AID PROGRAM AND PRESENCE IN THESE TWO COUNTRIES. FOR APPEARANCES' SAKE, CHINA MIGHT CONCEDE TO A SOVIET DIPLOMATC PRESENCE IN THE PRC PRESERVE OF CAMBODIA, BUT GIVEN PRESENT CONDITIONS THERE THIS IS ALMOST A NEGATIVE CHANGE FOR THE RUSSIANS. A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT SOVIET MILITARY IN THE AREA WOULD HAVE TO BE PART OF THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THEM. VIETNAMESE SENSITIVITIES OVER THEIR INDEPENDENCE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE TAKEEN INTO ACCOUNT SO THAT THE MOST WHICH WOULD RESULT IN A MILITARY WAY MIGHT BE SOVIET USE OF VIETNAMESE PORT FACILITIES FOR NAVAL VESSELS BUT CERTAINLY NOT THE ACQUISITION OF NAVAL BASES SUCH AS CAM RANH.

9. THE PRC MIGHT THINK THAT SUCH A MODUS VIVENDI WOULD GIVE THEM A FREER HAND TO LIMIT THE EXPANSION OF VIETNAMESE INFLUENCE ELSEWHERE IN SEA BECAUSE THE USSR WOULD BE CONSTRAINED FROM SUBVERTING THE CHINESE. THE COST, HOWEVER, WOULD BE GREAT. NOT ONLY MIGHT SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE INCREASE BUT THE CHINESE, TO MAKE THEIR NEW POLICY CREDIBLE, WOULD HAVE TO LINE UP WITH THE USSR AND VIETNAM IN OPPOSING CONTINUED
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U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN.

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

10. MOREOVER, EVEN A PRETENSE OF IMPROVEMENT IN SINO/SOVIET RELATIONS WOULD ALSO REQUIRE AT LEAST A DIMINUTION IN THE INTENSE AND OPENLY HOSTILE COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION OUTSIDE INDOCHINA. HERE AGAIN THEIR OPERATING STYLES ARE SO DIFFERENT THAT EFFORTS AT CONVEYING A SENSE OF RAPPROCHEMENT COULD ONLY BE ARTIFICIAL AND NON-SUBSTANTIVE. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN THE MOST MODEST PUBLIC CO-OPERATION WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF ASIA AS A SYMBOL OF SOMETHING MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT U D DANGEROUS. IT WOULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT AN UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN REACHED BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA ON HOW TO TREAT COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN THE AREA, THEREBY CREATING A DESTABILIZING LOSS OF CONFIDENCE AMONG ASIAN LEADERS AND ENCOURAGING THE INSURGENTS THEMSELVES.

11. AGAIN, COSTS TO THE PRC COULD BE HIGH: A STRONG JOINT STANCE AGAINST THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AND SUPPORT FOR THE SOVIET UNION'S COLLECTIVE SECURITY SCHEME AT A MINIMUM. HOW-EVER, IF THE CHINESE ACTUALLY EMBARKED ON SUCH A COURSE, THERE WOULD BE COSTS FOR US AS WELL. CHINESE TACIT SUPPORT FOR OUR CONTINUED MILITARY PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO US WITH JAPAN, THE PHILIPPINES AND SINGAPORE. A CHANGE IN CHINESE POLICY FROM QUIET SUPPORT TO VOCAL OPPOSI-TION TO THE U.S. PRESENCE COULD JEOPARDIZE OUR BASES AND OUR RELATIVELY FREE ACCESS TO PORTS.

12. IT IS REMOTELY POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, THAT SOME SORT OF DEAL COULD BE WORKED OUT WHEREBY FOR SHORT-RANGE TACTICAL REASONS THE FALLEN-OUT BIG BROTHERS MIGHT SUPERIFICIALLY APPEAR TO COOPERATE IN A JOINT APPROACH TO THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF THE AREA WITHOUT GOING AFTER THE U.S. BASES. OTHERWISE, NONE OF THE FOREGOING IS CONCEIVABLE UNLESS THE

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PRC HAD CONCLUDED THAT THE U.S. HAD GONE SO FAR DOWN THE ROAD TOWARDS ISOLATIONISM THAT OUR DEPLOYMENTS WERE NO LONG OF ANY VALUE IN BLOCKING THE SPREAD OF SOVIET POWER.

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INFO CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MRN 01243 VICE 01234)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

IDEOLOGICAL CEASEFIRE

13. ALTHOUGH CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COMMUNIST WORLD LEAD TO A CERTAIN CYNISICM ABOUT THE TRUE OR ACTUAL ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE TWO, EVEN A SURFACE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCOMPANINED BY A REDUCTION OF FIRING ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FRONT. THIS WOULD HAVE MORE EFFECT ON THE WORLD AT LARGE, PARTICULARLY ON REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AND PARTIES, THAN ON THE TWO MAIN ANTAGONISTS THEMSELVES. BOTH WOULD CONTINUE WITH THEIR FAVORITE DISTORTIONS OF MARXISM/LENINISM BASED ON THEIR OWN SITUATION AND NATIONAL CHARACTERS.

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14. WE WILL LEAVE IT TO EMBASSY MOSCOW TO COMMENT ON WHETHER THE SOVIET UNION WOULD EVER ACCEPT CHINA AS AN IDEOLIGICAL EQUAL AND WHAT THE EFFECTS OF SUCH A DECISION MIGHT BE ON THE USSR'S EASTERN EUROPEAN POLICY. THE CHINESE, HOWEVER, ARE UNLIKELY TO BE SATISFIED EVEN WITH A PRIMUS INTER PARES STATUS AT LEAST AS LONG AS THEIR FEAR OF REVISIONISM TAKING ROOT IN

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CHINA PERSISTS. FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, THEN, IT SEEMS
TO US THAT THE CHINESE WILL CONTINUE TO REGARD THE SOVIET
BRAND OF COMMUNISM BOTH IN THE USSR AND IN OTHER COMMUNIST
MOVEMENTS AS A DANGEROUS HERESY THREATING THE STABILITY OF
CHINA.

CONCLUSIONS

15. BOTH PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND INTELLIGENCE GIVE NO REASON
TO ANTICIPATE ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN PRC/USSR RELATIONS.
NEVERTHLESS, IF PEKING MADE A DECISION TO DO SO, THERE COULD
BE SOME REDUCTION OF TENSION, ON THE BORDERS. THIS IMPROVEMENT
OF RELATIONS, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT U.S.
INTRESTS AND COLD BE HELPFUL BY LESSENING THE RISK OF WAR.
THE PRC COULD NOT TAKE FUTHER SIGNIFICANT STEPS TOWARD A
RAPPROACHEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING
PEKING'S GLOBAL INTRESTS UNLESS THERE WERE SOME FUNDAMENTAL
REASSESSMENT OF WHAT THOSE INTRESTS WERE AND THE VALUE TO
THE PRC OF TRYING TO USE OUR POWER AND INFLUENCE AS A COUNTER
TO THE USSR.

16. THE GREATER DANGER FOR U.S. INTRESTS MAY WELL LIE NOT
IN AN IMPROVEMENT IN PRC/USSR RELATIONS BUT IN THEIR FUTURE
DETERIORATION. AGAIN, THERE IS NO CURRENT EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST
THIS IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. NEVERTHLESS, IT IS A POSSIBILITY
WE MUST REMAIN ALERT TO, GIVEN THE LIKELIHOOD THAT PRC
HOSTILITY TOWARD MOSCOW WILL CONTINUE. EMBASSY MOSCOW MAY
WISH TO COMMENT ON HOW LONG THE SOVIET PATIENCE WILL CONTINUE
AND WHETHER (AND AT WHAT POINT) THE USSR MAY DECIDE THAT
SINCE THE OLIVE BRANCH IS HAVING NO EFFECT THE IRON FIST
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MIGHT.

17. WE CONCLUDE FROM ALL THIS THAT THERE IS NOTHING THE
UNITED STATES CAN DO TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF PRC/USSR
RELATIONS DIRECTLY. WE HAVE ALREADY DONE A GREAT DEAL
INDIRECTLY BY CONVINCING THE CHINSE THAT U.S. POWER IS
USEFUL TO THEM AND NOT THREATING. THE SOVIET UNION HAS
DOUBTLESS ALSO CONCLUDED THAT THE POLICY OF DETENTE MIGHT BE
JEOPARDIZED IF THE USSR DID ANYTHING TO THREATEN THE SECURITY
OF CHINA. THEREFORE, WE CAN NOW, IT SEEMS TO US, CONCENTRATE
ON OUR BILATERAL PROBLEMS WITH CHINA, ELIMINATING THE SINO/SOVIET DIS
PUTE (OR THE POSSIBILITY OF A RAPPROACHMENT) AS A
MAJOR FACTOR LENDING URGENCY TO THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS.
WHETHER WE ARE ABLE TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION TO THE TAIWAN
ISSUE OR NOT WILL NOT MEAN ANY GREATHER OR LESSER ABILITY
ON PEKING'S SIDE TO MOVE TOWARD CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE
USSR. THIS IS NOT TO SAY WE SHOULD NOT OR NEED NOT SEEK A
SOLUTION TO THE TAIWAN PROBLEM(WHICH WILL BE THE SUBJECT

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OF A SEPERATE MESSAGE) BUT RATHER THAT WE ARE NOT IN THE
POSITION OF HAVING TO PAY A HIGH PRICE TO GET CONCESSIONS
ON THIS OR ANY OTHER BILATERAL ISSUE BECAUSE OF FEAR THAT
FAILURE TO DO SO MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO A PRC/USSR RAPPROACHMENT.
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